

The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAURICE TOURNEUR CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Maurice Tourneur, the forgotten pioneer filmmaker, born in Paris on February 2, 1876, will be given a four-day centennial celebration at The Museum of Modern Art from February 2 to February 6. This program illustrates the rich, imaginative, and highly visual style of this little-known peer of D. W. Griffith. Tourneur's substantial contribution to the development of motion pictures is evident in the four rare feature films being shown. Two of the works were made in 1918: "The Blue Bird," based on the Maurice Maeterlinck story, recently remade by an American company in the Soviet Union; and "Woman," an original screenplay in five episodes that attempts to define the female role since Adam and Eve.

"Victory," made in 1919, is based on the Joseph Conrad novel and features Lon Chaney. "The Last of the Mohicans," made in 1920, is an adaptation of the James Fenimore Cooper novel with Wallace Beery in the cast. It was co-directed with Clarence Brown.

Tourneur, whose first pictures were directed in France, came to America in 1914, and, with D. W. Griffith, was one of the first directors of feature-length movies. From 1914 to 1920, Tourneur made at least one picture a month. By the time he ended his American career in 1926, his output totaled 60 films. Returning to France, he continued as a director until 1948. One of his important later films was "Volpone," in 1941.

As a young man Tourneur studied under Rodin and Puvis de Chavannes, and

(more)

PRESS SCREENING SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 29, main auditorium

10:00 "Woman." 1918. ca 75 min. (reel 4 missing)

11:30 "Victory." 1919. ca 75 min.

Friday, January 30

10:00 "The Blue Bird." 1919. ca 90 min. main auditorium

3:30 "The Last of the Mohicans." 1920. ca 90 min. 4th floor
screening room

became a stage director with André Antoine. Subsequently, he began working for Eclair Studios in Paris, first as an actor, then as a director. He came to the United States to run the Eclair branch in Fort Lee, New Jersey, and after leaving the studio, independently made films that "reflect his theatrical culture and training in the plastic arts." Among his films were "Trilby," "Poor Little Rich Girl," with Mary Pickford, "A Doll's House," "The Wishing Ring," "Pride of the Clan," and "Lorna Doone."

In 1920 Tourneur was quoted as saying, "The cinema is a different medium for hieroglyphically expressing human thoughts using images instead of words, with a savagery no one means of expression possesses."

Tourneur's son Jacques, who learned his craft as his father's assistant, also directed films in Hollywood. The junior Tourneur received his first recognition for his talent for the macabre, notably in the brilliant picture "Cat People" (1942), which encouraged the horror film genre.

Maurice Tourneur is considered by film scholars a neglected unrecognized pioneer, characterized as "A sincere, thoughtful artist," whose work has form, style, and quality.

The schedule of his films follows:

"Woman." Monday, February 2 at noon.
 Tuesday, February 3 at noon.

"Victory," Tuesday, February 3 at 2:00 p.m.
 Thursday, February 5 at 8:00 p.m.

"The Blue Bird." Monday, February 2 at 5:30 p.m.
 Friday, February 6 at 2:00 p.m.

"The Last of the Mohicans." Tuesday, February 3 at 2:00 p.m.
 Thursday, February 5 at 5:30 p.m.

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